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AUTHOR Cook, Gillian; And Others
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ABSTRACT

To investigate conditions for and current practices among supervisors of English language arts, a 20-item questionnaire was mailed to 350 language arts supervisors. By the April 1, 1983, deadline date, 96 had returned completed questionnaires. Of these, 62 respondents held positions at the school district level, 29 held positions at the state or provincial level, and 5 held positions in other settings (e.g., regional, Panama Canal Zone, and Virgin Islands). Responses revealed a wide diversity in title of the position, scope of the position, number of schools in the district or state, range of responsibilities, support, and constraints. The most common titles suggested a role oriented more to people and human resources than to management and administration, particularly for district level supervisors. Among the other findings are the following: (1) the position appears to be a midmanagement staff role; (2) lack of time and money are seen as real constraints; (3) state mandates and regulations are viewed as impediments when considered in concert with union regulations and competency testing; (4) the majority of district and state supervisors have experienced an expansion of their roles and responsibilities in the past five years; and (5) district supervisors believe that the major portion of their time should be devoted to inservice and staff development. (HOD)

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SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF SUPERVISION
OF THE
CEE COMMISSION ON SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Sub-Committee Members:

Gillian Cook
Charles Duke
Frieda Owen
Peter Schiff

November, 1983

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CS 208 838

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF SUPERVISION
OF THE
CEE COMMISSION ON SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

--SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS--

In September, 1982, the CEE Commission on Supervision and Curriculum Development established a Sub-Committee on the Status of Supervision to investigate conditions for and current practices among supervisors of English language arts.

The sub-committee, composed of four members of the Commission, first met at the November, 1982, NCTE Convention in Washington, D.C. At that time, the sub-committee decided its major effort would be the preparation, distribution, and analysis of a questionnaire asking supervisors about their work and working conditions. Additional efforts would include examination of literature in the field and a survey of certification requirements for supervisors.

Between the Washington, D.C., meeting and a meeting at the Spring NCTE Convention in Seattle, Washington, in April, 1983, the sub-committee accomplished the following:

1. drafting of a questionnaire

2. revision of the questionnaire within the sub-committee

3. revision of the questionnaire based upon suggestions made by nineteen supervisors who were among those having agreed to serve as consultants to the Commission

4. duplication and mailing of the questionnaire to persons appearing on a "supervisor mailing list" housed at NCTE Headquarters

5. receipt and preliminary analysis of completed questionnaires.

At the Seattle meeting, the sub-committee met to discuss preliminary statistical data and to schedule completion of analysis of the anecdotal portion of the questionnaire.

In its final form, the Status of Supervision Questionnaire was a twenty-item instrument. With subcategories provided for many of these items, respondents were actually asked to provide information in thirty-three places on the questionnaire.

Under the direction of Charles Suhor, approximately 350 questionnaires were mailed. The mailing included a cover letter, a return envelope, and the questionnaire itself. By the April 1, 1983, deadline date, ninety-six completed questionnaires had been returned to the sub-committee chair. Of these, sixty-two respondents held positions at the school district level, twenty-nine held positions at the state or provincial level, and five help positions in other settings (e.g., regional, Panama Canal Zone, Virgin Islands). Because it was not known how many of the persons on the supervisory mailing list were currently in language arts supervisory positions, it was difficult to judge the degree to which the ninety-six responses reflected the population of language arts supervisors. However, because the typical questionnaire returned revealed such detailed responses, the sub-committee felt confident that its analysis of questionnaire data would provide useful information about the status of supervision--provided that the final report described the sample of supervisors who did respond.

What follows is a narrative, item-by-item summary of findings from the questionnaire. This narrative is drawn from examination of statistical data in tabular form. These tables run twenty-two pages. Summary of anecdotal data is presented as written by sub-committee members collaborating on this effort during the summer of 1983. In most instances, responses of supervisors at the district level have been merged with those of supervisors at the state level and in other settings. The list of conclusions following the narrative identifies specific differences between district and state supervisors' responses. Please note that the number of responses to any given item may not total ninety-six (the number of respondents) because some did not answer the item or because multiple responses were possible. In addition, respondents are referred to collective as "supervisors," even though those answering the survey hold a variety of titles.

Items 1 and 2--offered respondents the option of providing their name and professional address.

Item 3--Job title: Five titles predominated--consultant (20 respondents); supervisor (16); coordinator (16); director (12); specialist (10). Other titles received scattered mention.

Item 4--Job title(s) of your immediate supervisor: At the district level, respondents specified Director of Curriculum/ Instruction (21); Assistant Superintendent (13); Associate Superintendent (8); and other titles with three or fewer mentions each. At the state level, the twenty-nine respondents specified twenty-eight job titles. Of these, most (17) were in curriculum and instruction.

Item 5a--Job title(s) of the personal reporting directly to you: District level respondents noted the following titles five or more times--teacher (18); chairperson (7); secretary (5). State level respondents noted the following titles five or more

times--secretary (9); assistant (5). Twenty-two district and state level respondents reported no immediate subordinates. Other job titles received scattered mention.

Item 5b--Total number of persons for whom you have some supervisory responsibility: Average = 155; range = 0 to 2637.

Item 6a--Grade level(s) for which you are responsible: language arts, including related areas, reading not specified (32); only reading specified (6); language arts and reading (24); other subject area(s) and language arts and/or reading (34).

Item 6c--Do you have sole responsibility for language arts and/or reading supervision in your district (or state, if you are a state supervisor)?: YES = 45; NO = 51.

Item 7--Would you characterize your school district (or state, if you are a state supervisor) as: urban = 66; suburban = 57; rural = 42; public = 68; private = 39? (check all if applicable).

Item 8a--What is the approximate student enrollment in your district (or state, if you are a state supervisor)?: Average = 301,725 (for districts, average = 86,695; range = 1,000 to 2,000,000: for states, average = 862,985; range = 60,000 to 2,800,000).

Item 8b--In how many schools do you supervise?: Average = 179 (for districts, average = 47; range = 0 to 700: for states, average = 898; range = 0 to 4,800).

Item 9a--What type of contract do you have?: academic year (9-10 months) = 22; 11 month = 17; 12 month = 44; other = 12; no answer = 1.

Item 9b--Are supervisors in your district/state eligible for membership in a collective bargaining unit?: YES = 44; NO = 46; no answer = 6.

Item 9c--Are you tenured in your present supervisory position? YES = 34; NO = 55; no answer = 7.

Item 9d--If you are not now tenured in your present supervisory position, does your position carry with it the possibility of tenure?: Only ten respondents reported having classroom teaching duties. Among those ten, scattered responses were given in the one to five hour range.

Item 10b--If you have classroom teaching duties, what grade level(s) do you teach?: The ten respondents reporting classroom teaching duties reported working with various grade levels, K-12.

Item 11a--At the building level, are there any leadership staff specifically assigned to support your supervisory efforts e.g., department chairs)?: YES = 51; NO = 20; no answer = 24; uncertain = 1.

Item 11b--If you answered "yes" to item 11a, what is (are) their title(s) and responsibilities?: "Chairs" or "Department Heads" were mentioned forty-two times. Other titles receiving scattered mention included "specialist," "principal," "assistant principal," and "contact person." Responsibilities cited included curriculum change, materials/supplies, coordinating meetings, liaison supervising, school site leadership, and fourteen others. Only "curriculum change" (3 mentions) and "materials/supplies" (2 mentions) received multiple citations.

Item 12a--Over the past five years, has your supervisory role been: reduced = 10; expanded = 51; held stable = 25; "modified without change in degree = 6; no answer = 4?

Item 12b--If you answered "reduced," "expanded," or "modified" to item 12a, please specify: Those reporting "reduced" roles noted nine instances (e.g., loss of full time position, K-12 split into K-6 and 7-12 positions). Those reporting "expanded" roles noted thirty instances (e.g., more subject areas added, writing programs expanded). Those reporting "modified" roles noted eight instances (e.g., staff development role changed to accountability role; language arts responsibilities changed to basic skills responsibilities).

Item 13--Question #13 lists a number of supervisory responsibilities and powers. Under Column A, give the percentage of working time during a typical month that you believe you (ought to allocate) to each responsibility or power. Under Column B give (the percentage of working time during a typical month that you estimate you actually allocate) to this duty. Under Column C place a check mark on the line to the right of a power or responsibility you actually have.

ALL (N=96) Supervisor Resp.	Column A MEAN D	Column B MEAN SD	Power/Resp. = (%)
Curriculum Develop.	25.10 (14.90)	22.11 (16.79)	85 (89)
Inservice and other staff development	21.87 (13.12)	20.53 (16.09)	82 (85)
Teacher obs.	10.88 (5.81)	7.59 (9.55)	61 (64)
Teacher eval.	3.26 (5.09)	3.43 (6.74)	30 (31)
Administrative resp. (e.g., budgets/ schedules)	7.15 (9.50)	12.83 (15.19)	71 (74)
Textbook/ed. materials evaluation ordering	5.01 (4.88)	6.51 (6.02)	69 (72)
Program eval.	10.00 (7.78)	9.73 (9.15)	78 (81)
Staff recruiting/ hiring	1.24 (3.21)	0.86 (3.02)	22 (23)
Staff firing	0.35 (1.03)	0.29 (1.26)	10 (10)
Other staff management (e.g., trans./ teaching assign.)	0.78 (1.57)	1.09 (3.72)	34 (35)
Community/public rela.	3.36 (3.89)	3.02 (3.36)	50 (52)
Your own professional development	6.10 (4.47)	3.55 (3.19)	67 (70)
Other	4.89 (10.21)	8.45 (15.69)	18 (19)
TOTAL PERCENTAGE	99.99	99.99	

Item 14--By check-marking the appropriate line, specify how important each of the following was/is in preparing you for your supervisory role:

N = 96	very imp. N	(%)	somewhat import. N	(%)	unimp. N	(%)	NA N	(%)
classroom teaching experience	91	(95)	3	(3)	0	(0)	2	(2)
university courses	28	(29)	57	(59)	9	(9)	2	(2)
internship/ practicum	13	(14)	26	(27)	12	(13)	45	(47)
on-the-job training	70	(73)	11	(11)	2	(2)	13	(14)
inservice workshops	24	(25)	53	(55)	14	(15)	5	(5)
training spons. by natl./state/ local prof. org.	29	(30)	34	(35)	13	(14)	20	(21)
other	7	(7)	1	(1)	0	(0)	88	(92)

NOTE: Training sponsors cited: NCTE (19 times), various NCTE affiliates (14); IRA (12); ASCD (12); various IRA affiliates (5); Bay Area Writing Project/affiliates (3); other sponsors (4).

Item 15a--What supervisory skill(s) do you feel you need to acquire?: Supervisors at the district level expressed varied needs for supervisory skills--with one exception. Eighteen specified the need to improve "time management" skills. Other skills mentioned can be grouped into five general areas. Skills related to curriculum content and methodology were mentioned eleven times; ten items were related to helping teachers (e.g., promoting change, staff development); personal qualities and skills such as communication, assertiveness, endurance, tolerance and diplomacy were specified nine times; administrative and management skills were identified five times; and specific supervisory skills of classroom observation and conferencing were mentioned four times.

Among supervisors at the state level, there was a similar divergence of responses. Time management was again an area of interest, with four responses. There was a fairly strong emphasis on skills relating to curriculum content, knowledge, and experience, for a total in this area of nine items. Administrative and management skills were mentioned six times; skills related to helping teachers were included five times; and personal qualities were noted four times. Among this group, there was no mention of specific supervisory techniques, which is not surprising since supervisors at the state level have little opportunity for direct intervention in the classroom.

Item 15b--What are your strengths as a supervisor?: Both district and state level supervisors agreed more closely about their strengths than they did about their needed skills. Thirty-one district supervisors and fifteen state supervisors felt they were strong in interpersonal/human relations skills. Fourteen district and eight state supervisors cited their prior teaching and/or administrative experiences as strengths.

In addition, knowledge of content or methodology was mentioned by sixteen district supervisors, strong organizational skills by sixteen,

and curriculum development by seven. Various other "strengths" were noted five or fewer times each.

Item 16a--<u>If your state has certification requirements for supervisors, were you certified as a supervisor before or after getting your first supervisory position?</u>: Of the sixty-six respondents reporting that their state had certification requirements for supervisors, 43 (65%) indicated they were certified before getting their first supervisory position, while 23 (35%) were certified afterwards.

Item 16b--<u>How have you continued your formal education in supervision since taking your first supervisory position?</u>: Among both district and state supervisors, graduate level coursework was mentioned most frequently (23 times by district supervisors, 7 times by state supervisors). Seven district supervisors and one state supervisor reported that they were enrolled in or had completed doctoral programs. Seven district and four state supervisors indicated that they had participated in workshops or inservice programs. Other educational efforts in supervision included conference attendance, on the job training, and reading of professional literature.

Item 16c--<u>How many years have you held your current supervisory position?</u>: The average for the ninety-four respondents answering this question was 6.33 years in the current position. Of these, 46 (48%) are relatively new (5 years or less) to their present positions and 78 (81%) have been there ten years or less.

Item 17a--<u>What types of training activities do you initiate/direct?</u>: Responses might be grouped into five categories: staff development (e.g., workshops, inservice programs) = 99 citations of activities subsumable under this category; working with teachers (e.g., clinical observation, teacher intervisitation) = 86 citations; curriculum related activities (e.g., cooperative preparation of curriculum, program development) = 78 citations; demonstration lessons to faculty = 48 citations; administrative tasks related to training (e.g., committee work, textbook selection) = 21 citations.

Item 17b--What time provisions, if any, are allowed for training of teachers?: District supervisors specified time provisions in the following quantities: inservice days with schools closed (32); summer work (25); after school or preschool meetings with no mention made of pay for attending teachers (21); early release of pupils (17); released time with substitutes provided (11); after school meetings with pay for teachers attending (8); other provisions (4).

Comments from ten state supervisors echo the above findings, indicating time provisions are essentially a district-by-district prerogative with some states mandating a prescribed number of inservice days.

Item 18--Other than time and money, what kinds of constraints (e.g., union rules, state regulations, minimum skills testing duties) limit your efforts?: State regulations, although ranked third in number of responses, when combined with union regulations, red tape and competency testing, appear to be the most significant factor in limiting the efforts of supervisory personnel. It can be inferred that these regulations, in turn, create added duties and responsibilities, paperwork, lack of time, confused lines of authority and poor teacher/principal attitudes.

Although asked to identify constraints other than time and money, nearly 20% of the respondents did list time or money as constraints. Responses such as school calendar, insufficient staff, and too many teachers to supervise also relate to time and money.

Fourteen respondents noted that there were no constraints limiting their efforts.

Item 19--How have you made use of recent state mandates and regulations to assist you in supervision (e.g., used to implement team supervision, allowed for multiple use of required student writing samples)?: An analysis of responses to this item suggests that

district level supervisors make little or no use of state mandates. Writing, however, stands out as one curricular area which has been enhanced by state mandates. Six district supervisors also mentioned curriculum revision/instructional management as positive uses of state mandates. Other responses was scattered.

Among state respondents, five said that state regulations have allowed them a "foot in the door," something that district supervisors and teachers do not necessarily welcome. Several states reported no state mandates or regulations still under study.

Item 20--To the best of your knowledge, how does your staff's perception of your supervisory role differ from your own? Parallel your own?: A noteworthy number (21) of respondents believe their perceptions of their role parallel those of their staffs. Other respondents said that their staffs perceive that the supervisor has more power than actually exists and that staffs are unaware of the scope of supervisory duties and responsibilities. Some respondents found the question difficult to answer because they have no staffs or because they were not certain of what "staff" meant.

CONCLUSIONS

The major finding is that among the respondents to the questionnaire, a wide diversity exists, particularly in: title of the position; scope of the position (i.e., size of district or state in which employed, number of schools in district or state, range of responsibilities, support and constraints). Throughout the questionnaire, the spread and variety of responses and the large standard deviations that accompany the calculated means support this finding. However, despite this obvious diversity, some generalizations are supported by the data:

1. The most common titles (consultant, supervisor, coordinator, director) suggest a role oriented more to people and human resources than to management and administration, particularly for district level supervisors.

2. The position appears to be a midmanagement "staff" role. Respondents answer to superiors in the upper echelon of central office positions: Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Associate or Assistant Superintendent; their subordinates are primarily teachers or department chairpersons (rather than principals, whose subordination would imply more of an administrative "line" position for the supervisor).

3. District level supervisors most frequently will be found in urban or suburban school systems where they may supervise up to 50 schools with a student population base ranging from 10,000 to 50,000. Such supervisors will, on the average, have been in their positions at least six years. They will not have any teaching responsibilities. They will be employed on 11-12 month contracts with good possibilities for tenure but often without access to collective bargaining units.

4. State supervisors divide their time among urban, suburban, and rural school systems and may supervise up to 100 schools with an overall student population base between 100,000 and one million. Such supervisors have typically been in their positions five years, work on a 12 month contract, but have little opportunity for tenure or access to collective bargaining units.

5. State certification seems to be a widespread requirement for holding a supervisory position. However, research into the requirements themselves points to a wide divergence as to what are appropriate criteria for a supervisory certificate.

6. The majority of district and state supervisors have experienced an expansion of their roles and responsibilities in the past five years.

7. District supervisors believe that the majority of their time should be devoted to in-service and staff development, teacher observation, administrative tasks, and program evaluation. In practice, most of their perceptions are borne out except that the percentage of their

time devoted to administrative tasks is greater and time devoted to professional self-improvement is markedly less than expected.

8. State supervisors' perceptions of the amount of time to be devoted to certain aspects of their jobs seem to match up fairly well with reality except in the areas of administration--too much time--and professional self-development--too little time. State supervisors believe that the majority of their time should be spent on in-service development, curriculum development, and program evaluation.

9. Lack of time and money are seen as real constraints. Some support in terms of mandated inservice days, release time, and early student dismissal provide opportunitiesfor staff development. However, many of the responses concerning the calendar, added responsibilities, and insufficient staff, indicated a strong need for more time. This fit in plausibly with supervisors' most frequently specified needed skill, time management.

10. State mandates and regulations are viewed with mixed feelings--as impediments when considered in concert with union regulations, competency testing, and (other aspects of the job viewed as "coping with red tape";) as assets for enhancing work in curricular areas such as writing.

11. Supervisors at both state and district levels believe that the majority of the staff people with whom they work have a fairly accurate perception of the supervisor's role. The one variant in that perception may be in terms of the belief that the supervisor has more power for change than is actually the case.

12. In responding to a question concerning preparation for the supervisory role, classroom teaching experience and on-the-job experience were perceived as being very important elements. University courses, inservice workshops and training programs provided by professional organizations (e.g., NCTE, ASCD, IRA) were also seen as important by most of the respondents.

13. Most respondents indicated that they were continuing their formal education in supervision through university courses, inservice and conferences, or informal means such as professional reading and research. Both state and district supervisors felt more time should be allocated to such professional growth. Responses to several items on the questionnaire underscore that supervisors see their continued professional self-development as a priority.